

TERROR



TALES



NO. 34
FEB.-MAR.

REPRINT
EDITION

FROM THE CRYPT

FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER

IN THIS ISSUE:

E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
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AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! BACK AGAIN, I SEE! BACK FOR MORE CHILLS IN TALES FROM THE CRYPT? WELCOME, THEN! WELCOME TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR! IT'S YOUR MOST IN HORROR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER, PLAIN TO GURGLE YOUR BLOOD WITH ANOTHER CREEPY COLLECTOR'S ITEM! SO COME IN! IN THIS YARN, YOU WILL BE THE MAIN CHARACTER! OH, YOU'D LIKE THAT? WELL, WE'LL SEE! EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS WILL BE SEEN THROUGH YOUR... THE MAIN CHARACTER'S... EYES! READY? THEN START LIVING THE TALE I CALL...

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL!



YOU OPEN YOUR EYES, AND THE GLARING LIGHT OVERHEAD BLINDS YOU! SUDDENLY YOU REALIZE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN UNDER A SWIRLING SEA OF DARKNESS AND HAVE ONLY NOW COME TO THE SURFACE! A GREY HAZE HANGS OVER YOU... BUT SOON... EVEN THAT GLAZES AWAY LIKE CORNERS BRING TOWET ASIDE BY A PASTOROSULLY WOLOOD CUSTYR! THINGS COME INTO FOCUS! ZILLED OBJECTS SLOWLY FREEZE INTO SOLIDITY! A FIGURE BENDS OVER YOU, SHIELDING THE OVERHEAD GLARE FROM YOUR LIGHT-SENSITIVE EYES!



CAN YOU... CAN YOU SEE ME?
NOO YOUR HEAD IF YOU CAN!

YOU BOD YOUR HEAD, LOOKING UP AT THE FIGURE BEADING OVER YOU! HIS READY LITTLE EYES GANGE BEHIND THICK CRYSTAL-LIKE GLASSES! HE SINGS...

I KNOW IT! I KNOW I COULD DO IT! OH, WE WILL BE ASHAMED, YOU AND I! THE WORLD WILL FLOOR TO SEE US!



YOU LOOK AROUND! YOU ARE IN A SMALL INSTRUMENT-CLOUTERED ROOM! GLASS CABINETS FILLED WITH TEST-TUBES LINE THE WALLS! STRANGE SHAPED MACHINES SURROUND YOU! THE FIGURE STANDING OVER YOU PATS YOUR CHEST REASSURINGLY.

DON'T TRY TO MOVE! JUST LIE THERE! CAN YOU TALK? CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING?



YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH! SOMEWHERE BACK UNDER THAT SEA OF BLACKNESS YOU HAVE JUST RISEN FROM! IS THE MEMORY OF SPEECH? YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH, BUT ONLY A CHOKING GURGLE SPILLS OUT...

THAT'S ALL RIGHT! DO NOT WORRY! FOR WILL TALK AGAIN! I WILL TEACH YOU! NOW... REST...



THE FIGURE WITH THE THICK GLASSES TURNS TO GO! HE MOVES THROUGH THE APPARATUS-CROWDED ROOM TO A DOOR AND OPENS IT! HE REACHES FOR A LIGHT SWITCH...

I WILL BE BACK LATER! I MUST GO OUT FIRST NOW! IT IS TIME TO GIVE ANOTHER SHOW! REST! UNTIL LATER...



THE ROOM FALLS INTO DARKNESS AND HE GOES OUT! FOR A WHILE YOU JUST LIE THERE, LUCKING IN THE WARM AIR! THEN YOU TRY TO SIT UP! SOMETHING TIGHT AROUND YOUR CHEST DIPS IN! YOU ARE STRAPPED DOWN...



YOU TRY TO MOVE YOUR ARM! THE METAL BANDS ACROSS YOUR WRISTS HOLD THEM FAST! YOU CALL OUT, SURPRISED AT THE HANGLED SOBERNESS OF YOUR OWN VOICE! YOU LOOK DOWN TOWARDS YOUR FEET... AT THE HEAVY SCUFFED SHOES AND THE BANDS ACROSS YOUR LEGS...



HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU? WHAT IS THIS FIRM TRYING TO DO TO YOU NOW? A COLD GRILL OF FEAR SHIVERS OVER YOU! YOU TUG AND STRAIN! THE STRAPS ACROSS YOUR CHEST PART LIKE PAPER AND YOU SIT UP, TEARING YOUR ARMS LOOSE... YOUR LEGS...



YOU CRANK THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW OF THE ROOM OUT INTO THE NIGHT! THE COOL NIGHT, FILLED WITH A THOUSAND VOICES... A MILLION FLOODING STARS! TO YOUR RIGHT, LIGHTS GLEAM BEHIND SILHOUETTED BUILDINGS...



PEOPLE... MANY PEOPLE... MOVE IN THE LIGHT... SAYING LAUGHING... TALKING! SOMEWHERE, A CALLOPE PLAYS... ITS MUSIC DRIFTING INTO THE DARKNESS! A HARSH VOICE CALLS... DURING... PROMISING...



YOU ARE IN THE REAR ALLEYS OF AN AMUSEMENT PARK! THE LIGHT AND THE LAUGHTER AND THE MUSIC AND THE VOICES SEEM TO DRAW YOU... LIKE A MAGNET! YOU MOVE TOWARD THEM... SOME BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS... TOWARD THEM...



THEY'RE CLOSER NOW... THE LAUGHING PEOPLE! THEY MOVE PAST THE ALLEY... A SEA OF FACES... A SEA OF SMILES! AND NOW YOU'RE NEARLY THERE... NEARLY OUT OF THE ALLEY... NEARLY AMONG THEM...



THE WOMAN'S EYES BALGE IN HER BLANCHED FACE! SHE STARES AT YOU! HER HYSTERICAL SCREECH IS LIKE A DOOR SLAMMING OUT THE LAUGHTER... THE VOICES... THE MUSIC! SILENCE FALLS... FAVOR... BAD SILENCE!



SUDDENLY THE DOOR IS OPENED ONCE MORE! ONLY THIS TIME THERE IS NO LAUGHTER... NO MUSIC! SHOUTS OF DUBBY... SCREAMS OF TERROR POUR IN AT YOU...



AGAIN, THAT CHILL OF FEAR KNIFE THROUGH YOU! YOU TURN... TURN FROM THE SHOUTS AND THE SCREAMS AND THE BULGING EYES AND BLANCHED FACES... AND YOU RUN... BACK OF THE ALLEY... BARR INTO THE BLACKNESS...



FOOTSTEPS CLATTER AFTER YOU, BUT THEY SOON FADE? THE AMUSEMENT PARK IS VERY FAR AWAY WHEN YOU FINALLY SLOW DOWN TO A WALK? YOU SIGH FOR BREATH... AND YOUR HEART POUNDS IN YOUR CHEST LIKE A PISTON? YOU ARE ON A COUNTRY ROAD? THE RIBBON OF CONCRETE WINDS AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS? YOU MOVE ALONG IT...



BEHIND YOU, A GENTLE PURRING GROWS LOUDER AND LOUDER? A GLOW? YOU TURN... FACING INTO THE ONCOMING HEADLIGHT GLARE...



THE CAR PULLS UP BESIDE YOU? THE DRIVER CALLS TO YOU...



WANT A RIDE INTO TOWN, BUD?

YOU OPEN THE DOOR? FOR A MOMENT HE LOOKS AT YOU, HORRIFIED? THEN HE SCREAMS...



WHY DO THEY SCREAM WHEN THEY SEE YOU? THAT FRIGHTENED, TERRIFYING SCREAMING? YOU WANT TO STOP IT! YOU CLAP YOUR HAND OVER HIS MOUTH? BUT HIS EYES STILL SCREAM...



AND THEN HIS EYES GLAZE... AND ROLL... AND HE IS DEAD? HIS BODY GOES LIMP AND YOU LET IT SLIP AWAY FROM YOU LIKE A SOFT BAG? HE FALLS AGAINST THE STEERING WHEEL AND THE HORN BEGINS TO BLOW... A LONG MONOTONOUS MOAN...



YOU PULL HIM FROM THE CAR AND PUSH HIM TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD...



THE CAR PULSES ALONG THE CONCRETE RIBBON SMOOTHLY! THE ROAD SLIPS FROM THE DARKNESS AHEAD INTO YOUR HEADLIGHT BEAM AND DOWN UNDER THE RUMBLING WHEELS! SOON HOUSES BEGIN TO APPEAR! YOU ARE GOING INTO TOWN! AND THINGS SEEM FAMILIAR TO YOU...



AND THEN YOU SEE IT! THE SMALL WHITE COTTAGE! YOUR FOOT DEPRESSSES THE BRAKE PEDAL AUTOMATICALLY AS YOU SWIRL INTO THE DRIVEWAY! YOU'VE DONE IT A THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE! YOU KNOW IT...



YOU SLIP FROM THE CAR AND CROSS THE FRESHLY CUT LAWN! THE NAME ON THE SIGN STICKS FORWARD IN THE THICK BED STRIKES A FAMILIAR NOTE! THE NAME! 'STONE!' SUDDENLY YOU REMEMBER! ARTHUR STONE! THAT'S WHO YOU ARE! AND NANCY, YOUR WIFE... SHE'S WAITING FOR YOU...



YOU HAMMER ANXIOUSLY ON THE HEAT CLEAR FRONT DOOR! UPSTAIRS, A LIGHT GOES ON! FOOTSTEPS DESCEND INSIDE... COMING CLOSER... COMING DOWN THE STEPS! THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN...



NANCY! EVEN NANCY LOOKS AT YOU LIKE THAT! THOSE EYES... THOSE WIDE, FRIGHTENED, TERRIFIED EYES! AND NOW SHE'S SCREAMING... SCREAMING LIKE THE OTHERS...



AND NOW SHE'S RUNNING UP THE STAIRS, SCREAMING! AND YOU'RE RUNNING AFTER HER... CALLING HER NAME! ONLY IT ISN'T HER NAME THAT ESCAPES FROM YOUR THROAT! IT'S A CHOKING, GABBLING, GUTTERAL SNAAL...



AND NOW SHE'S IN THE BEDROOM... AND YOU'RE MOVING TOWARD HER... PLEADING! BUT THERE'S NO RECOGNITION IN HER EYES... ONLY WILD MYSTERY! AND SHE'S BACKING AWAY, BACKING TOWARD THE OPEN WINDOW... TOWARD...



SUDDENLY SHE'S GONE... BACKWARDS... OUT THE WINDOW! AND HER SCREAM IS CUT SHORT BY THE GULL THUD AS HER FLAILING BODY HITS THE BACKYARD PATIO BELOW! YOU RUSH TO THE WINDOW... LOOKING DOWN AT HER... SOBBERING...



WHEN YOU GET TO HER, SHE'S DEAD? HER LIFE-LESS EYES STILL STARE AT YOU IN BLAZING FEAR...



YOU STUMBLE TO THE CAR AND SPEED BACK TO THE CARNIVAL! THE MAN WITH THE BEADY EYES AND THE THICK GLASSES? HE'S DONE SOMETHING TO YOU? NANCY IS DEAD... AND IT'S HIS FAULT...



AND THEN YOU'RE SLIPPING BACK UP THE AMUSEMENT PARK ALLEY, INTO THE OPEN WINDOW...



YOU? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? THE PLACE IS DRAB AND ROTTEN! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ESCAPED!

YOU'RE MINE! I MADE YOU! I KNEW I COULD DO IT... AND I DID! I TOOK PARTS OF MONSTERS AND I PUT THEM TOGETHER! AND I TOOK A BRAIN... A BRAIN OF A MAN WHO DIED OUT THERE... IN MY GREAT MUSEUM... A MAN NAMED ARTHUR STONE! HE DIED OF A HEART ATTACK... AND I TOOK HIS BRAIN...



I MADE YOU LIVE! I ALWAYS BELIEVED IT WAS POSSIBLE! OUT THERE... IN MY CHAMBER OF HORRORS... THERE'S A TABLE FULL OF FRANKENSTEIN... AND HIS MONSTER! YOU'RE MY MONSTER... MY FRANKENSTEIN! WHAT AN EXPERIMENT YOU'LL MAKE! I'LL BE FAMOUS! I'LL... I'LL... DON'T... LOOK AT ME... LIKE THAT! NO! EEEEE...



YOUR FINGERS CLOSE ABOUT HIS THROAT, CUTTING OFF HIS SCREAM! AND EVEN AS THE LIFE FLEES FROM HIS TWITCHING BODY, YOU'RE STUFFING YOUR NEATLY STITCHED FINGERS... THE SCARF WHISTS... THE SCARRED ARMS...



...HRRRNNNN!

AND THEN YOU STUMBLE FROM THE ROOM... INTO THE WAX MUSEUM... LEAVING HIS LIFELESS BODY SPRAWLED AMID THE EQUIPMENT...



THEN YOU'RE STARING AT THE TABLEAU... BLOOD-CURLING GROUPINGS OF HISTORIC HORROR SCENES...



...AND SLOWLY YOU SEE IT! THE MOST REVOLTING SCENE OF ALL! A DISMEMBERED MONSTER... A CON-FLAGRATION OF STITCHED FLESH... A LEERING REPULSIVE THING... STARING AT YOU...



THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER... NO COUNT! YOU SLAP YOUR HANDS TO YOUR GULFERING MOUTH AS THE NAUSEA SWEEPS OVER YOU...



BUT THE MONSTER... THE MONSTER MOVES TOO!



A MIRROR! YOU'RE LOOKING INTO A MIRROR! THAT'S YOU IN THERE! THAT REPULSIVE, STITCHED-FLESHED, HORRIBLE MONSTER BEFORE YOU IS YOUR OWN REFLECTION...



YOU SMASH THE MIRROR INTO A THOUSAND SLIMP-WERING SHINING PIECES IN SHEER DISGUST AND HORROR...



THEN YOU'RE RUNNING... SCREAMING... OUT IN THE MIDWAY...



THE CLATTER OF FOOTSTEPS IS RIGHT BEHIND YOU, AS YOU SWING INTO A DOORWAY...



YOU'RE IN A MAZE... A MAZE OF SMOOTH-WALLED DARK PASSAGEWAYS... TRAPPED...



SUDDENLY, THE PASSAGEWAYS ARE FLOODED IN BRILLIANT LIGHT! FIGURES LEAP AT YOU FROM ALL SIDES... HORRIBLE, DISFIGURED, BITTER-FLESHED FIGURES...



...AND NO MATTER WHICH WAY YOU TURN, YOUR BADDENING REVOLTING REFLECTION GLARES AT YOU... SCOUTS AT YOU... SHRIEKS AT YOU IN UTTER REVELLION...



UNTIL... WHEN THEY FIND YOU... THE LIFE LEFT TO YOUR MORTUOUS BORN-DRAWN BODY HAS FAGED... ESCAPED FROM EACH COUNTLESS LONG DEAD SECTION... SUBTRACTED FROM THE SUM-PRODUCT OF HORROR THAT ADDED UP TO YOU... DRIVEN FROM YOU BY THE MADNESS OF YOUR OWN IMAGE...



HEH, HEH! YEP, KIDDIES! AS THEY ALWAYS SAY... IF LOOKS COULD KILL... I'LL... IN THIS CASE... THEY DID! I HOPE YOU LIKED TAKING THE PART OF THE MONSTER IN THIS STORY! I ALSO HOPE... HEH, HEH... THAT IT DIDN'T AFFECT YOU! IF I WERE YOU, I'D JUST GO ON TO THE MUSEUM KEEPER'S TALE'S WOULD'N'T...



THE VAULT OF HORROR!

WELL, NOW THAT THE DRIFT-KEEPER HAS FINISHED DISHING OUT HIS OLD OIL, IT'S MY TURN TO ENTERTAIN YOU FRENDS! WELCOME ONCE MORE TO THE HALL OF HORROR! THIS IS YOUR VAULT-KEEPER, WITH ANOTHER SCORCH MARK FROM MY COLLECTION! AND THIS ONE IS ABOUT OIL...BLACK, BOOBY, MONEY OIL! I CALL THIS BLOOD-CURLING HAIR-RAISER

OIL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL!



THE FLASHY CONVERTIBLE CAME TO A STOP AT A POINT ON THE HIGHWAY OVERLOOKING THE SPRAWLING MIDWESTERN TOWN! THE TWO MEN IN THE CAR LOOKED DOWN AT THE BOOBY'S AND SMILED

WELL, WELL, THERE SHE IS... WAITING FOR US... LIKE A BUTTING DUCK... WAITING TO BE FLOORED.

THERE'S THE PLACE... DOWN THERE IN THE CENTER OF TOWN... AND THERE'S THE CEMETERY...



THE DRIVER TURNED TO THE ONE WITH THE CIGARETTE BETWEEN HIS LIPS...

LOOK, PHIL! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO TALK WITH THAT SOTT GABBLING FROM YOUR MONTH? IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.

RIGHT ON! I'M SORRY, SAM! I FORGOT.



WELL, DON'T FORGET! AFTER ALL! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AN HONEST BUSINESS-DEAL! YOU LOOK LIKE A SNEAK! WHEN YOU DO THAT!

GRAY! GRAY! DON'T GET EXCITED, SAM! I'LL BE CALM, PHIL!



THE CAR CONTINUED ON DOWN THE HIGHWAY FINALLY, IT PULLED UP BEFORE THE ONE HOTEL IN TOWN.

ALL RIGHT! ON YOUR TORS! HERE WE GO! I'LL START GETTING THE GRIPS OUT! YOU CHECK IN!

RIGHT, SAM!



THE ONE NAMED SAM STARTED TO UNLOAD THE LUGGAGE FROM THE FLASHY CONVERTIBLE WHILE THE OTHER ONE... PHIL... ENTERED THE HOTEL AND CROSSED THE LOBBY TO THE DESK...

WORLD STRANGER! WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

I'D LIKE TWO ROOMS... ONE FOR MYSELF AND ONE FOR MY FIELD MAN!



FIELD MAN? WHAT'S THAT?

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF BY NAME IS PHILIP SAUNDERS! ONE OF MY BUSINESS! I LOCATE OIL DEPOSITS FOR THE OIL COMPANIES! MY FIELD MAN, MR. JIMMISON, HANDLES THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF PROSPECTIVE SITES! WE'RE JUST PAVING THROUGH!



OH, BUT WHY HERE? THINGS OF LOOKIN' AROUND THESE PARTS?

THANK YOU! BY... NO! WE'RE ON OUR WAY NORTH.

WHERE SHALL I PUT THE LUGGAGE, MR. SAUNDERS?



ROOMS ON AND SEE, UP THEM STAIRS AND TURN RIGHT!

YOU HEARD THE GENTLEMAN, TURN RIGHT!

YES, SIR!



THE MAN BEHIND THE DESK
SWITCHED AS SAM CARRIED THE
LUGGAGE UP THE STAIRS AND PHIL
FOLLOWED...



FIGHT THEM, JESS!
SITTA NEAR THAT?
THE DAPPER
LOOKIN' GUY'S
AN OIL MAN!

WE MUST BE
RICH! TAKE
A WANDER AT
THE CAF
PAUSED OUT-
SIDE!

UPSTAIRS... OUT OF
SAM WHISPERED ANGRILY TO PHIL...



... TALKING TO THAT
CLERK WITH THAT
CIGARETTE
DANGLING FROM
YOUR MOUTH?
WHAT ARE YOU
TRYING TO DO...
OVERTHE
DEAL?

I... I
FORGOT.
SAM! I'M
SORRY.

LATER... AS NIGHT CAME ON... IN THE
HOTEL LOBBY...



ONE HUNDRED
THOUSAND DOLLARS
MR. GARSON?

THAT'S WHAT
MAYBONE
OIL COMPANY
PAID? MY
COMMISSION
WAS TEN
PERCENT...



AND THAT'S ALL YOU DO IN
LOCATE OIL DEPOSITS,
AND WHEN THE BIG OIL
COMPANIES WANT COLLECT
YOUR COMMISSION FROM
THE OWNER OF THE
LAND?

RIGHT?
ENOUGH SEEMS
TO ME YOU'D
BE BETTER OFF
DRILLIN'
YOURSELF!



A LOT BETTER OFF! YOU'RE
RIGHT! BUT DRILLING
EQUIPMENT COSTS A
GREAT DEAL, MR. PHIL!
MORE THAN I'VE GOT! I'D
HAVE TO BORROW...

MR. GARSON?
MR. GARSON!

IT'S HIS
FIELD
MAN, MR
SIMPSON!



MR. GARSON! I'VE GOT TO
SPEAK TO YOU...
PRIVATELY!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT,
SIMPSON! OUT WITH
IT! YOU'RE ALL SCARED!
WHAT'S UP...?



OIL, MR. GARSON!
I'M SURE OF IT!

OIL? WHERE?

BETTER
COME
UP-
STAIRS,
MR
SIMPSON!

SAM FOLLOWED PHIL UP THE STAIRS, BEHIND THEM THE HOTEL LOBBY BUZZED WITH EXCITEMENT...



UPSTAIRS IN THE ROOM. THE TWO MEN SMILED. PHIL BROW THE SHADE ASIDE AND PEERED OUT...



FIVE MINUTES LATER, PHIL CAME DOWNSTAIRS! THE LOBBY OF THE HOTEL WAS ANNIHILATED WITH TOWN-FOLK...



MAYOR JORDON'S NAME BEEN ADVISED BY MY FIELD MAN THAT THERE IS OIL ON THE TOWN'S PROPERTY... UNDER THE CITY PARK!



HEY! THERE'S TOWN'S OIL UNDER THE PARK!
SHALL WE GO ON OWEK, MAYOR JORDON?
LET'S GO, MR. SIMPSON!



THE CROWD STOOD AROUND THE BLACK SLICK THAT OILED FROM THE GROUND IN THE PARK...



WELL... I COULD HANDLE IT FOR YOU... BUT IT WOULD COST A GREAT DEAL! ABOUT SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS...
SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS?
BUT WE COULDN'T AFFORD.



MAYOR JORDON TURNED TO THE SPEAKERS.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, FOLKS? DO WE TURN THE LAND OVER TO A PRIVATE COMPANY, OR RAISE THE MONEY AND DRILL FOR THE OIL OURSELVES...?

CONFIDENTIAL! FEAR! LET'S KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY!



LATER, IN THE HOTEL ROOM...

THEY FELL FOR IT, SAM? THEY'RE GOING TO FORM A CORPORATION AND ISSUE STOCK? I'VE BEEN PUT IN CHARGE OF THE DRILLING!

GOOD? NOW AS SOON AS THEY TURN THE MONEY OVER TO US, WE'LL PULL THE ROPE!



A CORPORATION WAS FORMED! STOCK WAS ISSUED! SUBSCRIPTIONS FROM THE TOWN'S LEADERS IN...

FINALLY...

THEN...

HERE'S A THOUSAND DOLLARS, MR. JORDON! THAT'S ALL WE COULD SCRAPE UP!

WELL, MR. BARSON? THE STOCK ISSUE HAS BEEN SOLD... EVERY LAST SHARE! HERE'S A CHECK FOR SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS!

GOOD! NOW WE CAN START THE DRILLING!

HERE'S THE CHECK, SAM! I JUST CASHED THE CHECK! WHY DON'T WE STOP FOR A MOMENT AT THE CEMETERY ROUTINE...

NO! I'LL WANT TO BUY THIS CRAP, AGAIN! YOU'VE GOT TO BE KEPT IN THE CLEAR! THE CEMETERY ROUTINE STAYS!



AND JUST TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T FORGET TO COME AND GIVE ME UP, I'LL HAVE THE BOSS! NOW GIVE ME ONE OF THOSE PILLS, AND PHONE THE BOSS! YOU KNOW WHAT TO SAY!

HERE THEY'RE...

S'LONG! DON'T FORGET! GIVE ME UP WITHIN SIX HOURS AFTER THEY GIVE ME! WE'LL PICK UP THE BOSS ON THE WAY OUT OF TOWN! AND FOR CRAP'S SAKE, BUY THAT CIGARETTE...

RIGHT! OH... I FORGOT! S'LONG, SAM!



MAYOR JORDON WISHED TO VISIT
BARBON'S HOTEL ROOM IN ANSWER
TO HIS FRANTIC PHONE CALL...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN,
THE OIL DEPOSIT'S
A FRAUD?

IT'S TRUE!
WHEN I FOUND
SIMPSON...
MY FIELD MAN,
JONES, AND THE
DRILLING MONEY
WENT TO, I
CHECKED!



WE POURED OIL
INTO THAT SANDY
SPOT IN THE FARM!
THERE'S AN OIL
ORDER THERE!
WE'VE BEEN
TAKEN/COMMED!

WE'LL GET
JIM! HE
WON'T GET
FAR!



JUST OUTSIDE OF TOWN, THEY
FOUND THE FLAKEY CONVERTIBLE.



HE'S
DEAD!

NEAR!
ATTACK,
PROBABLY.

DID
YOU
FIND
THE
MONEY/LAR?

NO!
NOT
A
DOL-
LAR!

PHIL BARBON WAS QUESTIONED CAREFULLY...

I... I THOUGHT HIM! HE'D BEEN WITH
ME ALMOST A YEAR! I CAN'T BELIEVE
IT! FIRST, LYING ABOUT THE OIL...
THEN STEALING THE MONEY... AND
NOW THIS! DEAD! I'M... I'M SO
SORRY FOR ALL THE POLICE THAT
TRUSTED ME!

IT WASN'T JIM!
PHIL! DO YOU
HAVE ANY IDEA
WHAT HE MIGHT
HAVE DONE WITH
THE MONEY, MR.
BARBON?



DON'T HE
HAVE IT
WITH
HIM?

NO! WE SEARCHED CAREFULLY HIS
CLOTHES... THE CAR! HE PROBABLY
HAD IT SOMEWHERE PLANNING TO
COME BACK AND GET IT! NOW,
IT'S LOST... FOR GOOD!



I'D LIKE TO CLAIM HIS
BLOOD... YOU KNOW... SHE
WAS A DECENT WOMAN!

OF COURSE, MR. BARBON!
I'LL GIVE YOU A
RELEASE!



AND SO, THAT AFTERNOON, SAN SIMPSON WAS BURIED!
NATURALLY, PHIL HAD MADE SURE THAT SAN'S BODY
WAS NOT IDENTIFIED...



AND WHEN THE EFFECTS OF THE FILL GAVE HIM SOME MORE OFF, HE WOKE UP SIX FEET UNDER THE EARTH...



WHAT'S THAT? SOMETHING STUCK... DRIVING INTO THE COFFIN? BRASSY WATER? I SMELL FUNNY...

THE WARM THICK LIQUID CONTINUED TO SEEP INTO THE COFFIN AS THE HOURS DRASSED BY...



PHIL WILL BE HERE SOON! WE'LL SEE ME UP! HEH! THAT SMELL?

THE ODDS FUBBLED HIGHER AND HIGHER IN THE COFFIN? IT ROSE ABOVE SAM'S EARS...



PHIL? FOR PETE'S SAKE? NOBODY... BEFORE I DROWN? WHAT IS THAT ODD?

SAM WAS PRESSING HIS FACE AGAINST THE SATIN LID OF THE COFFIN, SUCKING AT THE LAST TRACES OF AIR WITH THE DEBRIS SOUNDED FROM ABOVE...



IT'S PHIL! THANK THE LORD! HEH! PHIL? OH, PHIL I BE GLAD TO SEE YOUR STUPID FACE WITH THAT DANGLING CIGARETTE... AND... HO... NOW I KNOW WHAT THAT STUFF SMELLS LIKE! FOR LORD!

AND AS PHIL LIFTED THE LID OF THE COFFIN, SAM SCREAMED AT HIM, HIS BLACK SHINING FACE RIDING FROM THE SURFACE OF THE OIL-FILLED COFFIN...



IT'S OIL... PHIL!

HUNT

THE CIGARETTE DANGLING FROM PHIL'S MOUTH DROPPED INTO THE THICK BLACK OIL AS HIS JAW FELL OPEN IN ASTONISHMENT! SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A BLINDING WHITE FLASH...



HEH, HEH? PHIL FORGOT AGAIN? ONLY THIS TIME, SAM BLEW UP? OF COURSE PHIL WENT TO PIECES OVER HIS BAD HABIT, TOO! BUT THE LITTLE TOWN GOT ITS OIL BOOM AFTER ALL! THE DIRT BRAND SAM HAD HIDDEN WAS NEVER FOUND!

THEY TORE THE FLASHY CONVERTIBLE TO BITS, LOOKING FOR IT? WARRA OUT A CAR ON THE INSTALLMENT PLAN... A BIT AT A TIME? WE, NOW? SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAN, THE VAULT OF HORROR!



LOVE STORY



I met Negro in my last year of medical school. She had come to the university that year to study medicine as an exchange student from Mecklenburg, Germany.

Dr. Justin McGill was presenting an exhibit in his field of hematology, pertaining to any of the diseases of the blood, and as I was quite interested in this study, I spent much of my free time assisting him in preparing slides of blood smears.

I had just come from the university hospital with a fresh specimen of blood taken from a patient who was a "bleeder", one in whom the constituents of fibrin do not exist in proper proportion or proper quantity, thus preventing a clot to form when bleeding takes place. Many afflicted with this blood deficiency have died to death from a simple scratch!

Dr. McGill was conducting his hemocytology class when I entered his laboratory. I took a microscope from a wall cabinet and set it up on a table at the back of the room. I placed a few drops of the "bleeder's" non-coagulated blood on a slide and proceeded to study it under high-power.

I raised my head slowly from the eyepiece when a soft voice said in careful, precise English, "May I look at your slide?" It was a girl with seven-black hair and inquisitive dark eyes. Her face was as pale as her neatly starched laboratory frock.

She looked into my microscope. In a few seconds she said, "Hemophilat Delayed clotting of the blood and consequent difficulty in checking hemorrhage?"

"Right!", I added, surprised at her rapid cell-detection. "It's a congenital condition inherited by males through the mother as a sex-linked character."

"I feel so sorry for the people who are afflicted with it! They can't live a normal life ... they have to be so careful! There are so many strange conditions of the blood which are passed on from generation to generation", she said feebly. I thought she was just another medical student going through the usual stages of test-book hypochondria.

I soon learned that Negro was Dr. McGill's best student. She seemed obsessed with a morbid curiosity about blood. Whenever I worked in the lab, or classified types in the plasma depository, she would come to talk to me.

One day she came into the blood bank, her face more blanched than usual. I told her that she was studying too hard and recommended more rest. I left her in charge of the bank while I went to the medical building to see a dying friend who was wasting away from an invisible disease. Incidentally, the poor fellow was a classmate and an acquaintance of Negro's!

When I came back to relieve Negro, there was a red healthy glow to her face!

A few days later, my month-old friend expired. An autopsy showed a definite pernicious anemia. Half of the blood-content of his body had dried up in the course of a few weeks. Only a month before, he had undergone a complete physical and was found well and robust! As an added shock, I found a shortage of some forty-two pints in the blood bank!!

That night, I took Negro to town to see a movie. We were returning about midnight when my car was stalled by a sudden rain-storm ... wet wires! Negro and I sat in the front seat, watching the rain pounding on the hood and windshield. Soon I began to doze off ... but I didn't sleep very long! I was jolted upright by long, deep, gurgling, heaving, inhaling sounds!

I turned towards Negro. Her lips were bloody and her mouth was stretched over the alabaster-white surface of her writhing right forearm! She was swallowing her own blood as fast as she could draw it into her spastically contracting cheeks. But she could never satisfy her lustful thirst for as she grew stronger, she also grew weaker! As she gained blood, she also lost blood!

Now all was clear to me! Negro had inherited Vampirism as an old family trait. I had read of the ancient blood-suckers of Mecklenburg! When the rain stopped, I set my car ... and Negro ... ablaze. She would find sweet innocent rest at last!

But why hadn't she inflicted her blood-sucking upon me? Could it be that Negro, the reluctant vampire, was in love with me?!

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S GRIM FAIRY TALE!

I CALL THIS NAUSEATING NURSERY NOVELETTE...

ATTACKS OF HORROR!



ONCE UPON A TIME...LONG, LONG AGO... THERE WAS A TINY SEASIDE KINGDOM GOVERNED BY A FAT KING WHO WAS MAD ABOUT MONEY...

ONE THOUSAND... TWO THOUSAND...
THREE THOUSAND... FOUR THOUSAND...
FIVE...

*"KING MONEYMAD!
KING MONEYMAD!"*

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M COUNTING MY MONEY, ROYAL ADVISOR!
I TOLD YOU NEVER TO INTERRUPT ME WHEN I'M COUNTING MY MONEY!
NOW I'LL HAVE TO BEGIN ALL OVER AGAIN!
ONE THOUSAND... TWO...

BUT KING MONEYMAD!
I'VE GOT IT! I'VE GOT IT! / A WAY FOR YOU TO GET MORE MONEY!





THREE THOUSAND... FOUR... FIFTY? YOU'VE THOUGHT OF A WAY FOR ME TO GET MORE MONEY, ROYAL ADVISOR? HOW?

TAXES, KING MONEYBAG!

TAXES, ROYAL ADVISOR? WHAT ARE TAXES?



YOU CHARGE PEOPLE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MONEY PER YEAR FOR SOMETHING THAT'S CALLED A TAX?

WELL, WHAT DO YOU TAX PEOPLE FOR, ROYAL ADVISOR?

ANYTHING? YOU JUST TAKE OF A THING AND TAX THEM FOR IT!



THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT, EH, ROYAL ADVISOR? JUST TAKE OF SOMETHING AND TAX THEM FOR IT, IS THAT RIGHT? I'LL ISSUE A DECREE, ROYAL ADVISOR...

A TAX DECREE, EH, KING MONEYBAG?



A TAX DECREE? YES! TO ALL THE TITLED PEOPLE IN MY KINGDOM... DUKES, BARONS, LORDS, EARLS... FOR USING THEIR TITLES, I TAX THEM 80,000 PIECES OF GOLD A YEAR!

SORT OF A 'DUE TAX', EH, KING MONEYBAG? GOOD! I WILL ISSUE THE DECREE IMMEDIATELY!

AND SO, KING MONEYBAG LEARNED ABOUT TAXES HIS 'DUE TAX' WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS! MONEY POURED INTO THE ROYAL TREASURY FROM AMBIT TITLE-HOLDERS ALL OVER THE KINGDOM...



SEVEN THOUSAND... EIGHT THOUSAND... NINE THOUSAND... TEN...

KING MONEYBAG? KING MONEYBAG?

ROYAL ADVISOR! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO INTERRUPT ME WHEN I'M COUNTING MY MONEY? NOW WHERE WAS I...?

KING MONEYBAG! ALL TITLEHOLDERS HAVE PAID THEIR 'DUE TAX'! THERE WON'T BE ANY MORE MONEY COMING IN! THINK OF SOMETHING...

TAKE A DECREE...ROYAL ADVISOR!
TO ALL OWNERS OF BOARDS!
A TAX OF THREE PIECES OF GOLD PER SQUARE YARD OF CARPETS IS HEREBY LEVIED!



AND SO THE 'SALES TAX' WAS LEVIED!
MATE FISHERMEN PROTESTED...BUT TO NO AVAIL...



BUT I HAVE SIXTY SQUARE YARDS OF SALES!
MY FAMILY WILL STARVE!

...AND MONEY Poured INTO THE ROYAL TREASURY...

TWELVE THOUSAND...
THIRTEEN THOUSAND...
FOURTEEN...



FIVE MONEYBAGS!
SIX MONEYBAGS!

ROYAL ADVISOR!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU...
OH...WHAT'S THE USE?
WHAT IS IT NOW?



IT'S THE 'SALES TAX'...
KING MOREMAD!
ALL SALES HAVE BEEN TAXED!
NO MORE MONEY WILL BE COMING IN!
NOW WHAT?

ARE THOSE EXCESSIVE STILL
WANDERING AROUND THE
KINGDOM, ROYAL ADVISOR?
THE ONES THAT FELL FORTUNES...



YES, KING MOREMAD!

TAKE A DECREE...ROYAL ADVISOR!
BECAUSE THERE ARE TOO MANY FORTUNE TELLERS IN THE KINGDOM,
EACH ONE IS TAXED 100 PIECES OF GOLD...



'EXCESS PROPHETS TAX'...
EVENING?
GOOD!
I'LL ISSUE THE DECREE...

AND SO THE 'EXCESS PROPHETS TAX' WAS LEVIED!
ANGRY GYPSY FORTUNE TELLERS PROTESTED...BUT TO NO AVAIL...



BUT I WAS JUST ON MY WAY OUT OF THE KINGDOM!

100 PIECES OF GOLD...
OR YOU'LL BE STAYING HERE A LONG, LONG TIME...
IN A DUNGEON!

KING MONEYMAD'S MADNESS FOR MONEY GREW AND GREW AS MORE AND MORE POURED INTO HIS TREASURY! THE MORE HE GOT, THE MORE HE WANTED...

TAKE A DECREE, ROYAL ADVISOR! ANYONE WHO OWNS A FISHING BOAT IS TAXED 50 PIECES OF GOLD.

'POLE TAX'! EH, MINE...

NOW, KING MONEYMAD'S KINGDOM WAS A FISHING KINGDOM! SINCE IT WAS LOCATED BY THE SEA, MANY PEOPLE HAD FISHING BOATS! SO, WHEN THE 'POLE TAX' WAS LEVIED...

KING MONEYMAD HAS SOME FAR ENOUGH!

NINETY PIECES OF GOLD FOR A FISHING POLE. HE'S TAKING US INTO POVERTY...



BUT THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM WHO OWNED FISHING BOATS PAID THEIR 'POLE TAX' ANGER...

THIRTY - FIVE THOUSAND... THIRTY - SIX THOUSAND... THIRTY - SEVEN...

KING MONEYMAD! KING MONEYMAD!



NOW WHAT?

THE POLE TAX HAS BEEN COMPLETELY COLLECTED! BUT ANY IDEAS?

TAKE A DECREE! TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE FISHES IN THEIR HOMES...

'CARPET TAX'! EH?



THE PEOPLE OF KING MONEYMAD'S KINGDOM WERE FURIOUS...

50 PIECES OF GOLD BECAUSE I HAVE THAT STRIP MAT ON MY FLOOR...

A CARPET IS A CARPET! PAY UP OR ELSE...



PRACTICALLY EVERYONE HAD AT LEAST A MAT ON THEIR FLOOR! THOSE WHO COULDN'T PAY WERE DRAGGED OFF TO PRISON...

DADDY! DADDY! NO! NO! DON'T TAKE MY HUSBAND AWAY!

YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY THE 'CARPET TAX'! WHEN IT'S PAID, HE'LL BE RELEASED!



THE MONEY CONTINUED TO POUR INTO KING MONEYMAD'S TREASURY.

SIXTY-EIGHT THOUSAND... SIXTY-NINE...

"KING MONEYMAD!"

ALL RIGHT, ROYAL ADVISOR! WHAT'S THE BAD NEWS?

THE 'CARPET TAX'! IT'S ALL PAID UP!

THEN TAKE THIS DECREE, ROYAL ADVISOR! A TAX OF 20 PIECES OF GOLD EACH IS BEING LEVIED ON EVERY THING IN THE LAND...

'THUMB TAX'!

THIS TAX... THE 'THUMB TAX'... WAS THE LAST STRAW THE PEOPLE HAD BEEN TAXED UNTIL THEY COULD PAY NO MORE...

THEY HAVE NO MORE MONEY, KING MONEYMAD! THEY CANNOT PAY THE 'THUMB TAX'!

IF THEY CAN'T PAY THE 'THUMB TAX'... THEN THEY CAN'T HAVE THEIR THUMBS! TAKE A DECREE!

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

IT SAYS THAT THE 'THUMB TAX' MUST BE PAID, OR THE THUMBS WILL BE REMOVED!

GASP!

THOSE WHO COULD NOT PAY WERE LINED UP OUTSIDE THE PALACE! THE LINE WAS VERY LONG! KING MONEYMAD SAT IN THE PALACE COURTYARD NEXT TO THE ARCHWAY...

ALL RIGHT! BRING THEM IN... ONE AT A TIME...

THE KING SAYS BRING THEM IN... ONE AT A TIME...

THE FIRST MAN WAS ORDERED TO THE CHOPPING BLOCK...

FOR NOT PAYING YOUR 'THUMB TAX', YOU MUST LOSE YOUR THUMBS...

NO! MERCY! MERCY!

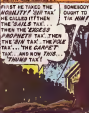
THE AXEMEN ARE FELL! THE MAN SCREAMED...



OUTSIDE THE CASTLE, THE PEOPLE ON LINE STARED AT EACH OTHER IN DISBELIEF...



THE LINE BEGAN TO MOVE! THE AXEMEN'S AXES ROSE AND FELL AGAIN AND AGAIN...



THE LINE CONTINUED TO MOVE! THE AXEMEN'S AXES ROSE AND FELL! SOMEONE SCROOED IN THE COURTYARD! OUTSIDE... THE LINE BEGAN TO SHAKLE... THEN SHOUT! SUDDENLY...



THE CROWD STORMED INTO THE COURTYARD, SEIZING THE KING! SOMEBODY GRABBED THE AXEMEN'S AXE...



THE CROWD MOVED IN! THE AXE WAS RAISED! THE KING SCREAMED! THE CROWD CHIEFED! THE AXE FELL! SOMEBODY BENT AND PICKED IT UP FOR ALL TO SEE... A MAN-LIKE, YELLOWISH, BLOOD-STAINED FORM...




HEH, HUH! AND THAT'S MY *GRIM FAIRY TALE* FOR THIS ISSUE. REQUEST THE PEOPLE SUFFERED KING MORTYMER'S TAXATION UNTIL THEY COULDN'T STOMACH IT ANY LONGER... AND THEN THEY TOOK KING MORTYMER'S... *STOMACH* THAT IS! *GRIM*? THAT'S THE IDEA! HEH, HEH! NOW... IF YOU'LL SHUT YOUR EYES RIGHT... TO THE OLD MYTON...



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HELLO! YEP, KIDNOS, IT'S YOUR HOSTESS IN *THE MANTLE OF FEAR*, THE OLD WITCH, STIRRING HER CAULDRON AGAIN, READY TO SERVE UP ANOTHER HORROR HELPING. THE RECIPE I'VE COOKED UP THIS TIME WAS FIRST DISHED OUT BY A VERY DEAR FRIEND OF MINE, AMERICA'S FOREMOST FANTASY WRITER, **RAY BRADBURY**! SO, TUCK YOUR SCHOOL BAGS UNDER YOUR ARMS, AND I'LL FEED YOU MY ADAPTATION OF MR. BRADBURY'S...

**THERE WAS AN
OLD WOMAN!**



THE TALL DARK YOUNG MAN STOOD QUIETLY, NOT MOVING. AGENT TILDY SHOOK HER HEAD, FURRING WITH HER EYEBROWS...

NO? THERE'S NO USE ARGUING. I GOT MY MIND FIXED. YOU RUN ALONG WITH YOUR SILLY BUCKED BASKET, LANDLARD. WHERE'D YOU EVER GET NOTIONS LIKE THAT? YOU JUST GET OUT OF HERE AND DON'T BOTHER ME.

THE TALL DARK MAN SAT DOWN, HE JUST SAT THERE, STARING. THE BONG-PONG-PLAIN, FLOWERED CLOCK ON THE MARTEL-CORMED THREE, OUT IN THE HALL, BOUNDED AROUND THE WOODEN BASKET. FOUR MEN WAITED, QUIETLY, HAPPLY MOVING, AS IF THEY WERE THERE.

HOW ABOUT THAT WICKER BASKET. IT'S NOT SIX FEET LONG AND BY THE LOOK OF IT IT AIN'T LAUNDRY. AND THOSE FOUR MEN YOU WALKED IN WITH, YOU DON'T NEED THEM TO CARRY THE BASKET. WHY, IT'S LIGHT AS THIRTY-LEAF JEFF

THE DARK YOUNG MAN WATCHED ALM TILTY SOMETHING IN HIS FACE SUGGESTED THAT THE BASKET WOULDN'T BE SO LIGHT AFTER A WHILE. THERE'D BE SOMETHING IN IT.

NOW WHERE'VE I SEEN A WICKER LIKE THAT BEFORE? BEEMS TO ME... OH! NOW I REMEMBER! IT WAS WHEN MR. DRYER PASSED AWAY NEXT DOOR.



AIN'T TILTY BETHER KNITTING DOWN STERNLY.

SO THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE HERE FOR, I KNOW! YOU WERE WORKIN' TO SELL ME SOMETHING. WELL YOU JUST BET TELL EARLY COMES HOME, SHE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU. WE'LL SEND YOU OUT OF THE MARLO SO QUICK IT'LL...

THE DARK MAN LOOKED AT ALM TILTY AS IF SHE WERE TIED.

NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT TIED. GREAT BONS O' SOBBER ON THE SILBERNY FIVE. I GOT A HUNDRED COMFORTERS, TWO HUNDRED SWEATERS, AND SIX HUNDRED POF-HOLDERS IN THESE FINGERS. NO MATTER POF BRINT THEY ARE, YOU RUN AND COME BACK WHEN THEY'RE DONE... AND MATEE I'LL TALK TO YOU.

THERE WAS A NOISE. THE MARTEL CLOCK BOUNDED THREE. STRANGELY IT SEEMED TO HER THAT IT HAD CHIMED THREE ONCE, BEFORE.

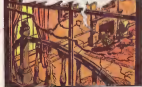
ARE YOU JUST GOIN' TO SIT THERE, YOUNG MAN?



HE WAS...

THEN, YOU DON'T BIDE IF I TALK A NAP. JUST A CAT-NAP. NOW YOU DON'T GET UP OFF THAT CHAIN. YOU BET THERE. YOU BET THERE AND DON'T COME CREEPY AROUND ME. JUST GOIN' TO CLOSE MY EYES FOR A WEB SPELL...

NO FEARNIN'. NO DROWIN'. NO DEEP, UNDER WATER. ALMOST. OH, SO NICE. WHO'S THAT MOVIN' AROUND IN THE DARK WITH MY EYES CLOSED? WHO'S THAT KISSIN' MY CHEEK? POF, CHILTY NO. GUESS IT WAS BT THOUGHTS. ONLY DREAMIN', DRIFTIN', DRIFTIN' OFF... OH.



THE CLOCK CHIRPED THREE TIMES. AUNT TILLY SAT UP. THE YOUNG MAN IN THE DARK SUIT STOOD NEAR THE DOOR. "YOU LEAVIN' SO SOON, YOUNG MARY GOOD THING! EMILY'S COMIN' HOME AND SHE'D ITS YOU. MAG TO BIVE UP, DIDN'T YOU FOOLIN'T DOWNHO? ME, COULD YOU? WELL, YOUNG MAN, YOU WEDDIN' BOTHEN DOWN' BADD' TO TRY AGAIN!"



THE DARK YOUNG MAN BOWED WITH SLIGHT OBEDIENCE HE HAD NO INTENTION OF COMING BACK... EVER.

FINE. WHY YOU COULDN'T SET ME OUT OF THIS HOUSE. HOSKINS? WHY, I'M GOING TO KAIT IN THIS WINDOW THE NEXT THOUSAND YEARS. THEY'LL HAVE TO OPEN THE SHARDS AROUND ME TO... TO... DONT LOOKIN' LIKE THE CAT THAT ATE THE BIRD? SET OUT AND TOTE THAT FOOL WICKER BOX WITH YOU!"



THE FOUR MEN TREADED HEAVILY OUT THE FRONT OOR. TILLY STUDIED THE WAY THEY HANDED THE WICKER. IF WASN'T HEAVY, SET THEY STAGGERED WITH ITS WEIGHT. SHE BLANCED ABOUT CONCERNEDLY...



HERE, WEDD' DID YOU STEAL SOME OF MY ANTIQUES? MY BOOKS? NO. THE CLOCK? NO. WHAT YOU GOT IN THAT WICKER?

THE DARK MAN OFFERED THE LID OF THE WICKER TO AUNT TILLY. IN FANTASIE HE WONDERED IF SHE'D LIKE TO OPEN IT AND TAKE INSIDE...



QUAROUS? WEDD' SHAIN, NO. SET OUT? SET OUT? HERE! HOSKINS!

THE OOR BLAMMED. THAT WAS BETTER DAMPED FOOL MEN WITH THEIR MAGGOTY IDEAS...



AN WERE COMES EMILY. ABOUT FIVE. BIT, LARD SHE LOOKS PALE AND FOMBY TODAY. WALKIN' SO SLOW...

EMILY SHUFFLED INTO THE HALL, HEAD DOWN. EMILY, I BEEN WAITIN' FOR YOU. THERE WAS THE DARNDDEST FOOL MEN JUST HERE WITH A WICKER. GLAD YOU'RE HOME! EMILY...



EMILY! STOP SCREAMING!



A WHITE-SMOKED MAN, EVIDENTLY A MORTICIAN, GLANCED UP FROM THE RECENTLY ARRIVED WIGGED AS AUNT TILLY STORMED INTO THE MORTUARY.

"MADAME! THIS IS NO FIT PLACE FOR A GENTLE-WOMAN!"

"WELL, GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY. THERE'S MY SENTIMENTS, EXACTLY. I DON'T WANT *ME* HERE! I WANT *ME HOME!*" I GOT EMILY TO FEED! SWATERS TO *KNIT!* GLOVES TO WASH...

THE MORTICIAN LOOKED AT HER, THEN AT THE WICKED, HE HEATHED HIS WORDS WITH APPARENT RELIGION, AND A WHISPERING OF HIS KNIVES, TUBES, JARS AND INSTRUMENTS...

"MADAME! I HAVE WORK TO DO! A BODY HAS ARRIVED!"

"YOU LAY SO MUCH AS A DISTURBANCE ON THAT BODY AND I'LL THROU- YOU!"

THE MORTICIAN OPENED THE WIGGED LID CAREFULLY THEN, IN A VICARIOUS SERIES OF SCOUTING, HE REALIZED THAT THE BODY WERE WAS, IT SEEMED, *COULD IT BE...*

"OH... THIS LADY, HERE? SHE IS... A RELATIVE?"

"NO! NO! FOOL! ME? DO YOU HEART ME? I WANT MY BODY BACK!"

THE MORTICIAN CONSIDERED THE IDEA, HE SHOOK HIS HEAD.

"NOTHING LIKE THIS DON'T *SAFFERY* SECRET! SHOW HER *OUT!* GET HELP FROM THE *DINNERS!* I CAN'T WORK WITH A *CRANE* PRESENT!"

THE FOUR MEN ASSEMBLED AND CONVERSED. AUNT TILLY WAS A LIAR, PORTRESS, ARMS CROSSED IN DEFIANCE.

"DON'T BUDGE!"

SHE REPEATED THIS AS SHE WAS EVICTED IN CON- VOLUTIVE MOVES, LIKE A PAWN ON A CHESSBOARD, FROM THE LABORATORY. FINALLY, SHE SAT DOWN ON A CHAIR IN THE VESTIBULE OF THE FUNERAL PARLOR, THERE WERE FEWS GOING BACK INTO GREY SILENCE AND A FLOWER SMELL...

"YOU CAN'T SIT *IN HERE,* MADAM! THAT'S WHERE THE *BODY* RESTS FOR THE *SERVICES* TONIGHT!"

"I'M *SITTING* HERE! TELL I GET WHAT I WANT!"

MR. GARRINGTON, MORTUARY PRESIDENT, HEARD THE DISTURBANCE AND CAME TROUBLE DOWN THE AISLE TO INVESTIGATE...

"HERE, HERE! MORE RESPECT FOR MADAME. MAY I HELP YOU?"

"OH IS THAT *BACK ROOM* THERE AND TELL THAT *EAGER INVESTIGATOR* TO GET *FOUR* WITH MY *BODY!*"



MR. CARRINGTON HURRIED OFF AFTER FIFTEEN MINUTES OF COMPARING NOTES WITH THE MORTICIAN BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. HE RETURNED, THREE SHADES WHITER



MR. THAT IS... MOST INTERESTING! MOST INTERESTING! YOU FELL THAT...
LOOK HERE! WESTERBLOOM AND BONES!

BUT HE'S ALREADY PUMPING THE BLOOD FROM THE BODY? WHAT?



YES, YES SO YOU JUST GO AWAY NOW. THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE. THE BLOOD IS RUNNING AND SOON THE BODY'LL BE ALL FILLED WITH WIDE FRESH FORMALDEHYDE. AND BONES... HE'S ALSO PERFORMING A BREEF AUTOPSY!



I'VE TO DETERMINE CAUSE OF DEATH. YEAH, HE



SEARCH STRAIGHT IN AND FEEL THAT CUT-EM-UP TO PUMP ALL THAT FINE NEW ENGLAND BLOOD RIGHT BACK INTO THAT FINE-SKIN RED BODY! AND IF HE'S TAKEN ANYTHING OUT OF HIM TO ATTACH IT BACK IN SO IT'LL FUNCTION PROPER! YOU HEAR?

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. NOTHING!



ALL RIGHT! I'M GETTING HERE THE NEXT TWO HUNDRED YEARS! YOU HEAR? AND NOTHING ANYONE COMES NEAR ME, I'LL SPIT SETOPLASM RIGHT DOWN UP THEIR LEFT NOSTRIL.



YOU, YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT? NO, YOU'LL DELICATE OUR BUSINESS! YOU WOULDN'T...



OH, WOULDN'T I?

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! YOU CAN HAVE YOUR BODY BACK.



HA!

AUNT TILLY SCREAMED IN TRANCE, THEN... WITH CAUTION.

INTACT? NO FORMAL IDENTIFICATION?

INTACT? NO FORMAL IDENTIFICATION?

BLOOD BACK IN IT!

BLOOD, MY GOD, FEEL BLOOD! IF YOU'LL ONLY TAKE IT AND GO!

FAIR ENOUGH. FIX 'ER UP. IT'S A DEAL.

I'LL... TELL THE MORTICIAN.



AUNTIE TILLY DIDN'T LOOK AT THE BODY MUCH. HER ONLY COMMENT WAS...

NATURAL LOOKIN'. EASY! EASY! PUT THE WICKER BARREL DOWN 'T THE FLOOR WHERE I CAN STEP IN IT.



THEN SHE LET HERSELF FALL BACK INTO THE WICKER. A BITING SENSATION OF ARTIS GOLDNESS. A GREAT UNLIKELY RASBERR, AND A CRODY WHORLING, LIKE TWO DROPS OF WATER FUSING TOGETHER. WATER TRYING TO SEEP INTO CONCRETE...



THE MORTUARY PEOPLE WATCHED AUNT TILLY'S WIGGLES... TRYING TO ASSIST WITH SCOOTING AND GRUNTING NOSES OF THEIR ARMS AND HANDS. SLEEPING INTO COLD GRANITE. SLEEPING INTO A FROZEN STATE... SCREAMING ALL THE WAY.

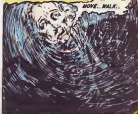
THE BODY HALF ROLLS, BUSTLING IN THE DRY WICKER -

SEE! FEEL!

COME ALIVE. BERNIE! RAISE UP A BIT...



LIGHT ENTERED THE HORROR BLIND EYES. THE BODY FELT THE ROOM WARMTH...



MOVE... WALK...

THE BODY TOOK A CREASINGLY UNSTEADY STEP. THE BODY WALKED...



NOW... SPEAK! MUSH DELICED. THANK YOU NOW... GRY!

AND SHEY TILDE NOGAN TO GRY TEARS OF UTTER HAPPINESS...

AND NOW, ANY AFTERNOON ABOUT FOUR, IF YOU WANT TO VISIT AUNT TILDE, YOU JUST WALK AROUND AND KNOCK ON HER DOOR. THERE'S A BIG BLACK FUNERAL BREADTH ON IT... BUT DON'T WIND THAT. AUNT TILDE LEFT IT THERE. SHE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR. JUST RAP ON THE DOOR AND SHE'LL SAY...



IS IT THE MAN IN BLACK?

NO. IT'S ONLY MS. AUNT TILDE!

SHE'LL UNLOCK THE DOUBLE-BARRED, TRIPLE-LOCKED DOOR AND SHE'LL LAUGH AND SAY...



COME IN... QUICKLY!

AND SHEY! WHEN THE DOOR OPENS AND CLAM IT SHUT BEHIND YOU SO NO MAN-IN-BLACK CAN EVER SLIP IN WITH YOU. THEN SHE'LL ESCORT YOU IN, AND MARGE POUR YOU SOME TEA... AND MARGE... IF YOU'RE SPECIALLY GOOD, SHE'LL GIVE YOU A 'DREAM'. SHE'LL UNFASTEN THE WHITE LACE AT HER NECK AND CHEST AND FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, SHOW WHAT LIES BENEATH... THE LONG BLACK AUTOMATED SCAR.



NOT BAD SCAR... FOR A MAN?



HEL, HEL! YEP, FRIENDS. THAT'S AUNT TILDE'S BERRY. THE WAY RAY BRADGORY TOLD IT TIME.

I HOPE YOU LARDED MY LITTLE SERVING OF SPOOKS FOR THIS ISSUE OF S.F.'S SCAR. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN THE KNOCK-OUTER'S THE HALL OF HORROR '87E. HOW?



The Crypt Keeper

